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3rd annual WHERE Challenge starts now!

Organizers appeal for help promoting Earth sciences contest to science teachers

(Toronto, Ontario) – After receiving rave reviews from hundreds of participating Canadian teachers and students, the WHERE Challenge is back for its third year and organizers are asking for your help. The national contest is endorsed by the Canadian Earth sciences community and sponsored by the Canadian Society of Petroleum Geologists (CSPG) and the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada (PDAC). The Challenge is designed to ultimately attract young people to the field of Earth sciences. Despite the recent economic downturn, experts say a crippling labour crunch is looming for the sector. According to several forecasts by organizations such as the Mining Industry Human Resources Council, the Petroleum Human Resources Council and the Canadian Federation of Earth Sciences (CFES), a wave of expected retirements and declining student enrollments means a critical gap could start emerging within the next few years.

Given this scenario, WHERE Challenge organizers believe the Challenge is more important than ever. Thanks to your support, dozens of school classrooms and more than a thousand students have participated in the Challenge so far. Organizers are asking for your help again this year in promoting the Challenge, stressing that educating science teachers about the benefits of the contest has proven the most successful promotional tool in the past.

"We believe that the WHERE Challenge is extremely effective at raising awareness among young people about the importance of Earth sciences," said Godfrey Nolan, Outreach Director for the CFES and WHERE Challenge judge. "We also know from experience that teachers are primarily responsible for encouraging students to take part in this Challenge. That's why we're asking our industry colleagues for help in promoting to this particular group."

WHERE Challenge organizers are also appealing to industry partners like you to promote the Challenge internally and externally through your network of contacts, as well as consider sponsorship of the Challenge. All these efforts go towards attracting the next generation of Earth scientists.

"Earth Science is not just about rocks," said William Stiebel, CFES President. "It covers any studies of the surface and depths of the earth, such as oceanography, paleontology – the study of fossils, environmental science, meteorology and seismology, to name just a few; they all offer tremendous opportunities to work, learn and travel the world."

The WHERE Challenge asks students aged 9 - 14 years to discover the answers to these questions: What on Earth is in your stuff and WHERE on Earth does it come from? The Challenge launches this month and runs until April 1, 2011, with more than \$16,000 in prize money up for grabs. Students are encouraged to use their imagination and create an educational story about *non-renewable Earth resources* found in an everyday item. Participating teachers in last year's Challenge say the contest is unique – it presents Earth sciences material to students in a way they can relate to. The WHERE Challenge allows for cross curricular collaboration and thematic teaching—art, english, social studies, technology and science departments can all get involved.

"Students and teachers are always looking for relevant connections to the 'real world' for the work they complete in the classroom," said Jeff Krar, a grade eight teacher at Calgary Science School. "This project met those needs. Other skills students needed for this project included problem solving, time management, creativity, editing, and perseverance." For more details, please visit www.earthsciencescanada.com/where or contact:

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